

The Inquisition

by Ian Paisley

The Inquisition was a system of persecution and punishment used by the Catholic Church to root out heresy and non-conformity, resulting in widespread suffering and death.

Scripture: Psalm 94:20, Proverbs 6:16, Isaiah 5:20, Matthew 10:26, John 8:32, Romans 12:21, 2 Corinthians 4:6, Ephesians 5:11, 1 Peter 5:8, Revelation 12:10

Topics: "Church History", "Roman Catholicism"

Description

Ian Paisley delivers a sermon reflecting on the horrors of the Inquisition, describing it as a system born out of prodigious iniquity and cruelty, incompatible with freedom and human dignity. He highlights the extensive confiscation of property, shedding of blood, and the fear it instilled in society. Paisley emphasizes the continued existence and operation of the Inquisition, connecting it to the Popedom and its medieval glory, expressing disbelief at its association with the Apostle Peter. The sermon delves into the history, crimes, and operations of the Inquisition, shedding light on its dark and revolting nature.

Transcript

THE Inquisition! This terrible word still falls heavily on the ears of mankind, and in Popish countries strikes a measure of terror into the hearts of the people; but in the palmy days of Popery, it was only another name for the mouth of hell! Most of the senior portion of the living generation whose reading lay in the direction of matters ecclesiastical, remember how their hair stood on end as they perused and pondered the terrible narratives of its cruelty and crime.

That such a system could have sprung out of Popery only serves to show the character of the fountain whence such a stream emanated, or of the furnace whence such a spark was emitted. It required prodigious iniquity to give it birth, to arrange its complex machinery, and to carry on its murderous labours!

It also serves as an index to the condition of human knowledge, and the state of public liberty in Europe during many ages. Such an institution was wholly incompatible with the existence of one iota of freedom, and sure it is, just as liberty has increased, its dominion has been abridged, although it is an indisputable fact that the Inquisition is not extinct, but exists and operates with considerable power at the present moment. It arose in the dark ages, and beginning its labours, it carried them on with a high hand for many generations.

None can tell the amount of property confiscated through its means, the amount of blood directly and indirectly shed, and the extent to which it upheld the Popedom by inspiring terror throughout society.

The system, thrice accursed, was extended, in 1571, to the western dominions of Spain, where, after working much evil in other parts of that kingdom, it might be said to concentrate its powers of mischief. But it is impossible, nor is it our object in so brief a space, to give a full view of the history and working of this infernal machine. It seizes its victims in the light, and it crushes their spirits in darkness!

Who shall tell the tale of its pulley, its rack, its firepan, and its wheel? Who shall tell the number of its victims, recount their bitter tears, and broken hearts? Who shall describe the character and the conduct of the Inquisitors, their rapacity, licentiousness and cruelty? There is, perhaps, no light in which the worst attributes of human nature have been ever so impressively and appallingly displayed, as in the doings of these men. The tale of each successive day was but a fresh chapter of horror and abomination.

They who have read the popular histories of it in Spain, and also at Goa, and the narrative of its opening by the armies of Napoleon in 1808, will understand us; and they who are aware of its re-establishment by the infamous Ferdinand, will see that while French liberalism opened its gates, Spanish despotism, true to its habits and its instincts, hastened once more to close them, and to re-establish the atrocious system that had there so long prevailed to the affliction of Spain, the terror of Europe, and the disgrace of humanity.

The object of this chapter is simply to connect it with the Popedom as an acknowledged institution, as a prized machine, as one of the prime ornaments of its mediaeval glory. We would impress the mind of the reader with the fact that an Inquisition still exists, and is in vigorous operation, although with more care than formerly. The instrument is worthy of the system to which it belongs; but it is surely an approach to the climax of impiety to connect such an institution with a chair which boasts to have been primarily occupied by the Apostle Peter! The subject is so full of all that is harrowing and revolting, that our soul recoils from it. Peter an Inquisitor! Peter, the President of the Inquisition! The idea is preposterous.

The Inquisition was introduced to Spain about the year 1232 when Pope Gregory IX. caused inquiries to be made concerning heretics, and appointed inquisitors to proceed against them. The dreadful work went on till the year 1474, when Isabella ascended the throne.

After this local inquisitions were established, chiefly at the request of the sovereigns of the various states, it having previously been customary for inquisitors to make periodical visitations, and to hold courts of inquiry. The history of the modern inquisition of Spain dates from the commencement of the reigns of Ferdinand and Isabella, 'of which by far the most complete account has been given by Llorente, the substance of which may briefly be stated. There are various classes of crimes against which the Inquisition proceeded. We cite the following:

The Inquisition also proceeded against concealers, favourers, and adherents of heretics, as being suspected of professing the same opinions. The seventh class was, composed of all those who opposed the Inquisition, and prevented the inquisitors from exercising their functions.

The eighth class comprehended those nobles who refused to take an oath to drive the heretics from their states. The ninth class consisted of governors of kingdoms, provinces, and towns, who did not defend the Church against heretics, when they were required by the Inquisition. The tenth class comprised those who refused to repeal the statutes in force in towns and cities, when they were contrary to the measures

decreed by the Holy Office. The eleventh class of suspected persons embraced all lawyers, notaries, and other persons belonging to the law, who assisted heretics by their advice, or concealed papers, records, or other writings, which might make their errors, dwellings, or stations known. In the twelfth class of suspected, were those persons who had given ecclesiastical sepulture to known heretics. Those who refused to take an oath in the trials of heretics, when they were required to do it, were also liable to suspicion. The fourteenth class were deceased persons, who had been denounced as heretics. The Popes, in order to make heresy more odious, had decreed that the bodies of dead heretics should be disinterred and burnt, their property confiscated, and their memory pronounced infamous. The same suspicion fell upon writings which contained heretical doctrines, or which might lead to them. Lastly, the Jews and Moors were considered as subject to the Holy Office, when they engaged Catholics to embrace their faith, either by their writings or discourse.

"Although all the persons guilty of the crimes above-mentioned were under the jurisdiction of the Holy Office, yet the Pope, his legates, nuncios, officers, and familiars, were exempt; and if any of these were denounced as heretics, the Inquisition could only take the secret information and refer it to the Pope. Bishops were also exempt, but kings had not that privilege."

"As the bishops were the ordinary inquisitors by divine right, it seems just that they should have had the power of receiving information's, and proceeding against the apostolical inquisitors in matters of faith; but the Pope rendered his delegates independent, by decreeing that none but an apostolical inquisitor could proceed against another. The inquisitor and the bishop acted together, but each had the right of pursuing heretics separately. The orders for imprisonment could only be issued by both together, and if they did not accord, they referred to the Pope. The inquisitors could require the assistance of secular power in the exercise of their authority, and it could not be refused without incurring the punishment of excommunication and suspicion of heresy. The bishop was obliged to lend his house for the prisoners; besides this, the inquisitors had a particular prison to secure the persons of the accused."

These things are matters of history, but we should fail of our duty did we not call attention to facts which have occurred in our own day. Dr. Buchanan, the celebrated Indian missionary, paid a visit in 1808 to Goa, once so famous as the seat of a branch of the Inquisition. Goa is a place of which the world knows but little, but it has claims to notice. The province comprised two hundred churches and chapels, and upwards of two thousand priests.

The doctor was anxious to obtain some knowledge of the state of things in the Inquisition, and accordingly he put himself in communication with certain Italian Jesuits; and this brought him into contact with the inquisitor, with whom he breakfasted almost daily, while he passed his evenings in the doctor's apartment. The chief inquisitor at last turns up, and further developments are perceived by the stranger.

On the following day the doctor writes:

28 January 1808.

This morning, after breakfast, my host went to dress for the Holy Office, and soon returned in his inquisitorial robes. He said he would go half an hour before the usual time, for the purpose of showing me the Inquisition. I thought that his countenance was more severe than usual, and that his attendants were not so civil as before. The truth was, the midnight scene (An uproar in the gallery of the convent one night, which the doctor at first feared might be made by his servants, whom he supposed in the act of being dragged to the dungeons of the Holy office; but which, in reality, arose from the cries of a boy, who

believed he had seen a spectre.) was still on my mind.

The Inquisition is about a quarter of a mile from the convent, and we proceeded thither in our manjeels (a kind of palankeen). On our arrival at the place the inquisitor said to me, as we were ascending the steps of the outer stair, that he hoped I should be satisfied with a transient view of the Inquisition, and that I would retire whenever he should desire it. I took this as a good omen, and followed my conductor with tolerable confidence.

He first led me to the great hall of the Inquisition. We were met at the door by a number of well-dressed persons, who, I afterwards understood, were the familiars of the Holy Office. They bowed very low to the inquisitor, and looked with surprise at me. The great hall is the place in which the prisoners are marshalled for the procession of the auto da fe. At the procession described by Dellon, in which he himself walked barefoot, clothed with the painted garment, there were upwards of one hundred and fifty prisoners.

I traversed this hall for some time with a slow step, reflecting on its former scenes, the inquisitor walking by my side in silence I thought of the fate of the multitude of my fellow-creatures who had passed through this place, condemned by a tribunal of their fellow sinners, their bodies devoted to the flames, and their souls to perdition. And I could not help saying to him, 'Would not the holy church wish, in her mercy, to have those souls back again, that she might allow them a little further probation?' The inquisitor answered nothing, but beckoned me to go with him to a door at one end of the hall. By this door he conducted me to some small rooms, and thence to the spacious apartments of the chief inquisitor.

Having surveyed these, he brought me back again to the great hall; and I thought he seemed now desirous that I should depart. 'Now, father,' said I, 'lead me to the dungeons below; I want to see the captives.' 'No,' said he, 'that cannot be.' I now began to suspect that it had been in the mind of the inquisitor, from the beginning, to show me only a certain part of the Inquisition, in the hope of satisfying my inquiries in a general way. I urged him with earnestness but he steadily resisted, and seemed to be offended, or rather agitated, by my importunity.

I intimated to him plainly that the only way to do justice to his own assertions and arguments regarding the present state of the Inquisition was to show me the prisons and the captives. I should then describe only what I saw, but now the subject was left in awful obscurity. 'Lead me down,' said I, 'to the inner building; and let me pass through the two hundred dungeons, ten feet square, described by your former captives. Let me count the number of your present captives, and converse with them. I want to see if there be any subjects of the British government, to whom we owe protection. I want to ask how long they have been here, how long it is since they beheld the light of the sun, and whether they ever expect to see it again. Show me the chamber of torture, and declare what modes of execution or of punishment are now practised within the walls of the Inquisition, in lieu of the public auto da fe If, after all that has passed, father, you resist this reasonable request, I shall be justified in believing that you are afraid of exposing the real state of the Inquisition in India.

To these observations, the inquisitor made no reply, but seemed impatient that I should withdraw. 'My good father,' said I, 'I am about to take leave of you, and to thank you for your hospitable attentions-it had been before understood that I should take my final leave at the door of the Inquisition-and I wish always to preserve on my mind a favourable sentiment of your kindness and candour. You cannot, you say, show me the captives and the dungeons; be pleased, then, merely to answer this question, for I shall believe your word. How many prisoners are there now below in the cells of the Inquisition?' The inquisitor replied,

`That is a question which I cannot answer.' On his pronouncing these words I retired hastily towards the door, and wished him farewell. We shook hands with as much cordiality as we could at the moment assume, and both of us, I believe, were sorry that our parting took place with a clouded countenance."

The discoveries made by the armies of the First Napoleon on taking Karne and opening the Inquisition are well known, but the abomination was restored. The revolution at Rome in 1819 was the means of opening the Inquisition there, to the gaze of an astonished world. For the accommodation of the military it was intended to modify one of the convents, and in the course of the work human bones were found, and a trap-door discovered.

This led to excavations being made, and further discoveries of human bones. Digging deeper still the workmen lighted upon a vault, where a great number of human skeletons were found; some of them so close together and so amalgamated with lime, that no bone could be moved without being broken.

In another vault was found a vast quantity of black rich earth, mixed with pieces of decayed animal matter, and human hair of such length as to lead to the belief that it belonged to women rather than to men. From the manner in which the skeletons found in the vaults were placed, it was evident that they must have been deposited there since the erection of the edifice, which was within a period of less than twenty-four years.

The bones of such a multitude of human beings, supplies volumes touching the doings of the so-called Holy Office. The full history of the dread place, however, will not be known till the day which will reveal the hidden things of dishonesty.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/ian-paisley/the-inquisition/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net